

# *Newsletter for Birdwatchers*

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**Two months in Kihim**

While Kihim always provides a lovely holiday, the pile of unattended letters on our return is a daunting sight. Will try and deal with them in good time - now that my hand is in action again, that can no longer be an excuse for dereliction of duty. One of the birds which were so numerous around Kihim 50 years ago were nightjars. Every time we drove there at night their gleaming red eyes were lighted by the headlights of the car. Now there are none. But I am glad that they survive in Tamil Nadu (see article in correspondence section by Zai Whitaker).

I have often referred to the coucals (crow pheasants) of Kihim and the regular pattern of the calls of males and females. The 5 note call of the male is so often answered by the 4 note call of the female, at a slightly lower pitch (as becomes a female's status in our society). But this time, strangely, I noticed two changes: the coucals rose as early as 5.15 a.m., and secondly, they called almost "interminably" at times - something which I have never noticed earlier.

A trio of grey hornbills (2 adults and 1 young) were around a great deal. The banyans, peepals and jamuns were teeming with berries and frugivorous birds had a good season. Saw one active nest of a coppersmith, of which there were many around.

One memorable sight this time was to see the fury of a crow against its dead companion. My grandson with his high class telescopic air gun managed to bring down one, and hung the dead body at a suitable place as a possible meal for civet cats which he was studying. Before the cat arrived a group of jungle crows managed to retrieve the dead body of their companion and celebrated the occasion by a general conference on top of a casuarina tree. Thereafter, one member of the assembly set about tearing the victim to pieces. As an act of demented fury I have never witnessed anything like it. Perhaps it was a warning to all the jungle crows around against falling a prey to Homo sapiens.

**Salim Ali or J.C. Daniel**

Ever since the Twelfth Revised & Enlarged Centenary edition of the Book of Indian Birds was published in 1996, I have been wondering whether the B.N.H.S. and Daniel did the right thing by producing this hybrid by two authors. Even if it involved only a minor addition to the original, the new version in the name of the original author would have been wrong in principle. In fact the original book contained 296 species, the later edition contains 538; 242 additional species. The original book consists of 18 Orders. The new one contains 16 Orders, as per the new "fashion" (to use Salim Ali's appropriate word). In the new classification Falconiformes has been eliminated and

hawks, kites, vultures, falcons and eagles are now placed under Ciconiiformes (which formerly consisted of herons, ibises, spoonbills, flamingos and such like). The new arrangement appears rather odd to the layman. The old Order Podicipediformes has been dropped and the little grebe (*Podiceps ruficollis* - now converted to *Tachybaptus ruficollis* is placed in the Order Ciconiiformes).

It is customary in the world of literature to retain the writings of great masters in their original form, mistakes and spelling idiosyncracies included. The eleven editions of the BOIB by SA is a classic collection by any standard and should be left unchanged for posterity.

J.C. Daniel's revised and enlarged vision should have been a new volume (and could be again), and in this he could explain the rationale of the new classification, and of the many recent scientific advances as a result of the emphasis on DNA and genetic influences in the evaluation of species.

#### Threatened Birds of the World

We have spoken about this book quite often in the past and now at last we have a review by Aamir Ali in this Newsletter. In his covering letter of 20-3-2001, Aamir suggested that we "publish the list of 123 threatened and near threatened birds in India". This I have been able to do through the kindness of Aasheesh Pittie and BNHS. Now it is up to us to work towards eliminating the threats to these birds in whatever way we can.

#### A Bibliographic Index to the Ornithology of the Indian Sub-Continent

Aasheesh Pittie never rests on his oars, and apart from the monthly *Pitties* which are a joy to read, he has now produced a CD ROM on Ornithology which is likely to be of immense help to those seeking to enhance their scientific knowledge about birds. I took over the disc to a computer friend and asked him to produce information about one of my favorites, the ashy wren warbler. Nothing happened. Then we realised that the disc dealt only in scientific names. By pressing a few buttons a long list of references appeared on the screen. I am sure the seekers of knowledge will find this 20 year effort of great value. See Aasheesh Pittie's announcement in this issue..

#### Home Study Course in Ornithology

I see from a recent report that this course in the Rishi Valley Education Centre (517 352, Chittoor Dist., A.P.) has enrolled 453 persons already, and from the letters of appreciation received from the participants it is likely to keep "prospering". S. Rangaswami, the founder and fulcrum of this Course, received a well deserved tribute from the Director of the Rishi Valley School : Dr. Radhika Herzberger.

"In April 1997 Mr. Rangaswami established a Department of Bird Studies as part of Rishi Valley School. In order to create a permanent presence for the department, he upgraded it to

its present status, an Institute of Bird Studies and Natural History. The Institute, which lists the eminent ornithologist Dr. Santharam on its faculty, draws visiting naturalists from different parts of the country to the valley and engages in conservation activities. Mr. Rangaswami extended the range of the Institute's activities still further by creating an ambitious Home Study Course on ornithology. He single-handedly wrote out all 24 out of the 26 chapters of this Course in two months, in a period of feverish creativity. When the designing of this course and production of the study material presented additional problems, he switched roles and became an assiduous fund raiser. The funds he collected now support a scholarship scheme for prospective students, which include housewives, senior citizens, school going children, as well as underprivileged members of society from almost every state in India. Mr. Rangaswami plans to conduct training courses in ecological restoration, bird identification in the field and bird census surveys in the summer, when students are out of school and college. 'He is a role model to all of us', wrote Professor M.S. Swaminathan of Mr. Rangaswami's work.]

Mr. Rangaswami's presence at Rishi Valley School, has enriched the lives of the students and teachers. He has made us aware of a source of beauty that we might otherwise not have seen or heard. He has taught us to care for the natural world. His achievements stem from his dedication of wisdom, to beauty and to the well-being of all living things. The comment of another great naturalist, Roger Tory Peterson, may help to explain the passion of Rangaswami's life: "If we are to save the birds, we have to make as many people as possible aware of the threats to their survival ... We must save the birds, and in saving them, we will save the earth."

#### Humayun Abdulali

I met Humayun in Kihim on the 25th of May just a few days before he died. He was sitting in the garden on his usual arm chair, with binoculars focussed on a casuarina tree where the common grey hornbill (the ones with a casque) nested. The Origin of the Species by Charles Darwin was on his lap, with several other classics on the ground around him. It was sad that his last years were spent in physical distress, though luckily his mind remained as sharp as ever.

#### William Selover 500 Dollars Grant for Nature Conservation

The grant has been awarded to Dr. Satish Pande and his colleagues for protecting the swifts on the Vengurla Rocks. What they intend to do, is described in the article in this issue. The money is being sent to the Ecological Society, Pune, whose President Prakash Gole will oversee the operations and ensure effective action.





## Swift Action that Saved the Swifts

DR. SATISH A. PANDE, VISHWAS KATDARE and RAM MONE  
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To document the current status of the various nesting terns and of the edible-nest swiftlets of the Burnt Island, Vengurla Rocks, so as to publish the verified facts in our coming publication, *The Birds of Kokan and the Western Ghats*, we set foot on the Burnt Island on April 8, 2001 at 9 A.M. We found the barren island covered here and there with some dry grass. A few dead decaying terns with black wings, some with yellow beaks and many broken egg-shells with blue blotching were scattered on the island. Innumerable swifts were sallying over the island. Suddenly the swifts started disappearing in the very ground in front of us. Careful inspection revealed that this was a skylight to the large cave which was sprawling beneath us into which the swifts were plunging at great speed. Burnt Island was easily 75-130 feet above the sea level and the edges of the island were a sheer vertical drop to the sea. The entrance to the cave was at sea level and to reach it meant a vertical climb, down a 50 feet cliff-face. What we saw after peeping through this skylight was mind boggling. The cave was filled with a bamboo framework which reached the roof of the cave. We sensed that something was wrong. The bamboo was not supposed to be here. To investigate further Vishwas negotiated the cliff and entered the cave.

He called from inside the cave and we could see and hear him through the skylight which was 70 feet above. We lowered the still and video cameras, measuring tapes, notebook, flashlight and pen with the help of a rope through this skylight. A yell from below told us that the walls of the cave were plastered with bird nests and that the birds were continually colliding against Vishwas. All this time we could see from above that the swifts were freely entering and leaving the cave via the skylights which were actually two in numbers. By this time the afternoon sun was blazing in full fury. We had sent back the launch and had asked them to collect us again at 6.30 p.m. The village of Niwati-Modha from where we had started was 7 nautical miles away. We were on the Burnt Island in the Arabian sea (N16°35'-45', W 73°27'-30'), the three of us, with no possibility of shade. Shelter there was. We found a bamboo framework, probably erected by the same people who had built the frames in the cave. Ram tried to climb down the cliff but since the going was difficult, on my behest he abandoned the plan. I (SAP) opted to swim around the island to the entrance of the cave after negotiating three rocks which were covered with goose barnacles, and sea-urchins, thereby liberally bruising my feet and hands.

In the cave there was not a single place free of the bamboo framework, for such was the massive structure. It meant that the activity was several years old. There were new bamboos and old ones tied with strong strings. All were coated with 2 inches thick layer of birdshit. It was obvious that this was erected to poach the birdnests which were on the walls of the

cave and on the roof. With the aid of torchlight we could make a conservative estimate of about 3000 nests. The nests were pearly white halfcups stuck sidewise and were sticky and a bit spongy. The free edges were re-enforced with straw, obtained from the island. None of the nests had eggs. But since most nests were nearly complete the eggs would have been laid in a day or two. Many nests were infested with bugs and tiny maggots. Guano-eating cockroaches were abundant. We also saw a variable number of brown rock pigeons and small bats in the cave close to the roof. All this while the swifts were colliding against us and two swifts which clung to the nest were identified as *Collocalia unicolor*. All the nests were attended by the birds.

By evening the swifts which were busy making the nests in the dark recesses of the cave started leaving the cave in large numbers and flew over the island, a few departing to the coast. At dusk we saw them returning to the cave through the skylight in their hundreds. The cave was about 360 mt. long 4.5 mt. wide and 15 mt. high. In the dark cave the swifts were navigating at tremendous speed with sonar echolocation. One should also consider the blinding effect that they would experience after coming to the dark cave from the bright outer skies.

The dimensions of two nests were 1) 66 mm x 70 mm x 23 mm depth (2) 45 mm x 50 mm x 23 mm depth. The nest density at various places was 22/sq. mt. 38/sq. mt and 4/sq. mt. This gave an estimate of about 3000 nests. Having completed our documentation and taking various readings we reached Niwati at 7.45 pm in the motor driven ferry which came to take us back. Before taking our dinner we gathered a large crowd from the fishing hamlet and on a colour TV screen showed them the video tape taken by Vishwas while in the cave. We asked them as to who had erected the bamboo frames and why. We learnt that they were built over a period of years by some persons who come twice a year for collecting pigeon droppings for some medicinal purposes. Why we asked them was a tall bamboo frame required to collect the droppings from the floor. Then they realized that something was definitely wrong. A truckload of bamboo-frames and another truckload of rotting bamboos were seen on the floor and this was being played on the screen in front of their very eyes. We told them about the swifts and about their saliva-nests and about the demand for them in the Far East countries, that the trade was banned in India and the birdnests were protected by the Indian Wildlife Act. *We spent one hour with them which was to pay us dividends later.*

The following day after our return to Pune and Chiplun respectively we got the addresses of the CCF, The Regional Deputy Director, WR, The CF Kothapur circle. We dropped letters to all the authorities. But I (Satish Pande-henceforth the narration is by this author) was getting anxious since the

next three days were public holidays and no action could be taken. This was frustrating for the doctor inside me. I have no concept of a holiday. *When life is at stake there is no time to be lost. And here 3000 nests were at stake.* My God this was unthinkable. Something had to be done. I obtained the phone numbers of CF Kolhapur and from him of the DCF Sawantwadi under whose jurisdiction the Rocks come. I informed them on phone about our suspicions of clandestine trade in the birdnests. This was news to them! On the request of the DCF I sent a detailed e-mail to him. Then I e-mailed all my birdwatcher friends with a request to forward the mail to their friends since this was a grave matter. The BNHS, "I am a member", Sanctuary magazine, Newsletter for Birdwatchers were also contacted and informed. I got an answer from many friends one of whom was Mr. Ulhas Rane who kindly forwarded the message to the e-mail group of all India birdwatchers-Pakshimitra. Then as per the suggestion of Mr. Prakash Gole I also apprised Vice Adm. (Retd) M. P. Awati so as to involve the Coast Guards if the need should arise.

We had reliably learnt that the poachers usually came to the island in the last two weeks of April. It was any time now. The thing was getting very urgent. The forest squad had not yet gone to the island and this was discouraging. In order to create a public awareness on this issue a press release was made in the Marathi newspaper *Sakal*. On 16 April, Monday the news was carried on the first page with photographs. It was an appeal to all the bird and nature lovers to request the CCF to take immediate action. The bamboo structure had to be immediately removed before the arrival of the poachers. On the same evening I got a phone call from south Konkan from a fisherman. He had read the news in the paper. He told me that a dozen people had landed on the Rocks in the noon and that they had unloaded a fresh supply of bamboo. This was the most crucial and timely information. This fisherman was one of the many who had attended our video lecture that evening. Our one hour of conservation awareness drive had paid off!

I immediately rushed to the STD booth and phoned the Sawantwadi DCF Mr. Gupta. He said that he was dispatching two Guards the next day to verify the status of the island cave. I told him about the recent development. He was not aware of this development. I felt concerned about the nests but also about the safety of the Forest Guards. The poachers could be armed. If alarmed they would run away and would never be caught. I requested the DCF if he could send a bigger, armed force of the Guards? At 9 pm the DCF was in the office. He

promised to take a serious view of the facts and believed me and thanked me for the timely information.

Because the drama was enacted in the sea on an island, I thought of informing Vice Admiral Awati also. I was getting panicky. The Vice Adm. gave me a couple of phone numbers of the Coast Guard officers. Contact could not be made that late. All this while I thought of the poachers taking away one nest after another. After a sleepless night I got a call from the Vice Adm. that the Coast Guards had promised to send a chopper and if necessary a ship to the island. I also got a call from their office asking for an official Fax complaint which I lodged. Help was assured. After a long time all seemed well. A phone to the CF Kolhapur confirmed that a large party of RFO's was on its way to the rocks at 6 am.

That night I received information that 5 poachers and a local person were arrested red-handed with 6 bags full of birdnests, by the Forest Department in a swift action. The RFO's were in uniform and there was no resistance offered. Now the matter is in the court. Another battle will now begin.

The dutiful officers of the Forest Department of Sawantwadi, many bird lovers who encouraged us on the e-mail, the nature conservation conscious people of the village of Niwati-Medha who informed us about the arrival of the poachers, all deserve credit for the safety of the swifts in this unique conservation action on the remote and forgotten Bunt Island cave where the Indian edible-nest swiftlets still roost and nest in their thousands. Long term conservation plans should now be undertaken.

#### Comments:

But the work is half done. The bamboo framework is yet to be removed and the cave entrance is to be sealed with an iron grid. The forest people and Coast Guards will have to make regular patrols to this site also. The SW Monsoon roughs up the sea by mid May. The island would soon become inaccessible. The next harvest of the nests would be due in September. We should take one more swift action. The legal status of the swift family which does not feature in any of the schedules needs to be strengthened. The Vengurla Rocks should be declared a special Protection Area. Fresh studies of the marine terns nesting here need to be undertaken. Swift ringing can be carried out. Nature awareness programmes need to be undertaken at the various fishing hamlets. The youth here is definitely responsive but unaware and ignorant. We solicit the aid of the Forest Department and of the BNHS in these activities.



## The Bengal Florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis* in Dudwa

ASAD R. RAHMANI

Bombay Natural History Society

One of the drawbacks of working on the endangered species is that one gets very frustrated by seeing continued decline of the species due to habitat destruction, mismanagement, lack of firm commitment by the government

to protect the species, and over-all public apathy to wildlife conservation. One species that gives me some hope is the Bengal florican *Houbaropsis bengalensis*. Habitat protection is the major step for saving species and in the case of Bengal

florican of Dudwa National Park, it is clearly proved that if we protect sufficient habitat, species can survive even if the number is small.

The Bengal florican is one of the most endangered bird species of India, and perhaps the most endangered member of the Bustard family in the world. I now have more than 15 years association with this bird. In a major study conducted between 1985 and 1990 through the funds provided by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, we had estimated that less than 400 Bengal Floricans survive in India. Dudwa National Park in Uttar Pradesh was one of the strongholds. My colleague, Ravi Sankaran did his Ph.D. on the floricans and Dudwa was one of his study areas. We spent long hours watching this enigmatic bird, sitting on a 30 m machan or an elevated spot.

Before our intensive studies starting in 1985, Carol and Tim Inskipp, famous British birdwatchers and now known to most Indian birdwatchers through their indispensable book (with Richard Grimmett) saw two male floricans in Dudwa during their short visit in 1984. Our studies from 1985 to 1989 revealed that nearly 40 floricans are found in Dudwa National Park. I also saw many good grasslands in Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary in Lakhimpur-Kheri district, Lagga-Bagga in North Pilibhet district, Katemlaghat Wildlife Sanctuary in Bahraich district and Sohagi-Barwa in Gorakhpur (now Maharajganj district) (all districts are in Uttar Pradesh). I was pleasantly surprised when I was able to locate Bengal floricans in Kishanpur in 1991-92. This gave me hope that perhaps this endangered bird still survives in other potential grasslands of the *terrai* of Uttar Pradesh. In Lagga-Bagga, a small grassland enclave of about 11 sq. km, I am sure the Bengal florican is found because it abuts the grasslands of Sukla Phanta Wildlife Sanctuary of Nepal from where there are persistent reports of Bengal floricans. Birds know nopolitical boundaries especially between two friendly countries with open borders!

The Bengal florican show high plumage dimorphism in male and female. The adult male is a handsome bird about 55 cm high, with jet black head, neck, breast and underparts. The back is buff-brown, heavily mottled and vermiculated with black arrow-head marks. The breeding males have elongated feathers on the head, neck and breast, giving the appearance of moppy head, thick neck and hanging breast. The wings of breeding males are spotless white except the black outer webs of the first and second primaries. When closed the wing shows up as a long broad white patch on the side. During flight the white wings become conspicuous. Like all bustards, it has a very interesting courtship display to attract females, which is cryptically coloured and extremely difficult to see. This aerial display usually takes place in an open patch of a grassland where the territorial male spends most of its evenings and mornings. First it stands with head, neck and breast feathers fluffed up. It may stand in this posture for many minutes, sometimes up to 20-30 minutes and then it jumps diagonally forwards at an angle of about 45 degrees, producing a flapping sound (*dhab, dhab dhab*). On reaching the peak of ascent the sound stops and wings are opened displaying glistening white wing feathers against jet black body. It then starts a

sharp whistle-like 'chip-chip-chip' call. The neck is inflated and hangs like an elongated black balloon. It then glides down for some distance with open wings and just about a metre from the ground. It begins to flap again and moves forward gaining the lost height. On reaching the apogee of the second flight curve, it stops flapping wings and floats down more or less vertically with partly open wings, drooping pouch, dangling and even paddling legs. It usually covers between 20 to 40 m of ground in this aerial display and takes about 7 seconds from take off to landing. It calls 4-7 times while in the air. This display is usually seen for 2-3 hours in the morning and the same duration in the evening. However, on cloudy weather, it may display even during noon hours. The best way to see this spectacular display is to inconspicuously wait near a grassland and allow the bird to show itself.

Coming back to Dudwa, perhaps 10-15% of the Indo-Nepal population of Bengal floricans survives in this famous Park. In 1988-89, we saw 14 territorial males and five other males. Assuming that the sex ratio is 1:1, we estimated that at least 40 adult Bengal floricans are found in Dudwa. In May 1996, I did a very thorough survey of Dudwa and Kishanpur to see how this species is faring. Nothing can delight conservationists more than to see some increase in the number of an endangered species. Six days of hectic search revealed 25 male floricans. All the grasslands where we had seen adult territorial male floricans between 1985 to 1989 had floricans in 1996 also. I suspected some increase in their numbers, which perhaps could also be due to better search efforts. In 1996, my estimate was that between 48 and 56 adult floricans are found in Dudwa National Park, and perhaps 10 to 20 in Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary. Dudwa and Kishanpur now constitute Dudwa Tiger Reserve (DTR) so this Reserve had 50 to 76 adult Bengal floricans in 1996.

Between 9 to 15 May, 2001, I conducted another thorough survey in Dudwa and Kishanpur with the help of Manav Khanduja and Utpal Das of Centre for Environmental Law (WWF) and Amar Deshpandey of BNHS. We searched all the known territories of the Bengal florican and some new areas also. We could locate 23 territorial males, and two females. In only two territories in Dudwa, we could not locate any male florican. Unfortunately, we had very little time in Kishanpur but even then we were able to see one displaying male. Harish Guleria of the Wildlife Institute of India, working on the grasslands of the *terrai* for his Ph.D., has seen 33 males. Even if we assume that some males were counted double (although unlikely in this highly territorial bird), we can easily say that between 25 to 30 males are found in Dudwa and Kishanpur.

Fortunately, the Bengal florican is doing well in Dudwa, thanks to the proper maintenance of grasslands by the Forest Department. The best time to see the Bengal florican is from March onwards once the grasslands are burnt, till mid June, when the park closes. Most of the tourists go to Dudwa to see tiger and many return disappointed, but if they look beyond the tiger, they may be able to see one of the most endangered and enigmatic bustards of the world.





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## The Year of the Rosy Pastor

THEJASWI. S

An early November day at Lingambudhi lake. 5.45 a.m. The chattering of mynas and other roosting birds had begun three-quarters of an hour earlier. The clamour begins to rise in content and volume, faintly audible to early morning 'walkers' along the double road a kilometer away, then reaches a feverish, claustrophobic pitch about half an hour later. Slowly, the dark outlines of waterlogged Acacia trees emerge, highlighted at the tops as we face the pale pink eastern sky. White forms hitherto coalesced together are now marked out individually - the egrets - cattle mostly, with little and median sprinkled over here and there. Dark forms of cormorants and glossy ibis too appear but are not clearly visible as they are further off. All this as the frenzied racket of the starling fraternity shows no sign of abating.....All of a sudden, there is the momentary lowering of the chorus and then, the rosy pastors. Enormous flocks of rosy pastors begin to issue out of the trees, emanating like wisps of smoke out of a chimney on a windy day. The flocks seem to come out from here and from everywhere - the edge of the tree grove, the middle, the other end; confusion reigns supreme. At last, one of the many flocks begin to head north, another couple, south and the largest of them all, around half a mile in width turns east. All in all, the excess of 5000 birds! The flock heading south turned back, settled on some embattled Dalbergia trees and flew away again, now splitting into a small group for the south and the rest for the north. In the meanwhile, a couple of thousand common and jungle mynas, around five hundred grey headed mynas and a surprising two thousand blackheaded mynas seemingly vanished in a short spell of a couple of minutes, considering the ten minutes taken by the pastors. Each species of myna is distinctive in flight, recognizable even in the feeble light of early mornings. Individual flight characteristics like size, undulating patterns and frequency of wing-beats come into play, so also the group formations. The rosy pastors, for example, have sleek bodies, a dark head set against a lighter body, dark narrow wings with no pattern and a quicker flight with respect to the common and jungle mynas. They are easily separable from the greyheaded and blackheaded species by size. They fly in close-knit formations, sometimes twisting and turning like stunts during the initial moments of departure from the roost. Even the group flight calls are distinctive enough to merit a role in diagnosis, especially when chaotic scenes like this one are witnessed.

Egrets begin to leave at around six thirty. In earlier seasons, they would depart en masse, giving the appearance of a 'Ksheera sagara', a sea of milk. This year however, they would leave individually or in groups of two to thirty, taking their time to take off. The figure in number had also reduced from a peak of four and a half thousand last year, five thousand for three seasons running before that to about half that figure this year. Glossy ibis, numbering about 330 and cormorants of the large and little species are amongst the last to leave

the roost. Forlorn in the morning calm, broad white blotches are seen on favourite trees in the roost. Nesting cormorants, spoonbills, grey herons, darters and grey pelicans somehow make up, albeit temporarily, for the absence of the crowd.

The year 2000 will be marked in red letters for the death of over fifty birds at the lake, an incident that saddened our hearts. To see a bird die in hand, to see a lake die in hand. An incident, the cause of which was put down to Avian botulinism, the symptoms of which apparently coincided with those of the dead and dying birds. An incident, the result of which could have been a better consensus on protecting the habitat from the relentless march of 'progress' but which instead exposed deep rifts between concerned citizens and unearthed a hitherto covert attempt by certain other people to spare the unsuitable lake, 'unsuitable' to birds they said, for 'private developers' or in plain words, land sharks. Once saved from a ring road that planned to cut across a major inflow channel, once earlier from the now familiar land sharks, the lake faces crisis after crisis and an uncertain future. A project for laying pipelines to divert sewage water from entering the lake, though much needed, destroyed much of the only patch of grassland left in the area - about half an acre. In addition to this, four acres of grassland have been 'afforested'. Is the forest department and the core group of concerned citizens opaque enough not to realise the sway of grasslands in the local ecosystem even after we have cried hoarse on the issue? Do they really want more 'productive' forest, as they foresee it? These grasslands are also where people from the neighborhood come to spend evenings with their children. Has the social cost been given even a cursory glance? It is the same rigmarole going on throughout India and the world. And moreover, we as a people are supreme egotists, unbending to sink differences even when crises have to be faced. It is this reason that most that destroys or dismantles environmental campaigns in the country. One can only do what is in ones hands. Fatalism is sometimes inescapable.

2000 was also the year of the rosy pastor, of the blackheaded yellow wagtail and the Demoiselle crane. Huge 'swarms' of rosy pastors apparently swamped the entire area of Kamataka this year, particularly the southern parts of the state. The severe drought in the traditional wintering grounds of Gujarat, eastern and central Maharashtra and northern parts of Kamataka & Andhra Pradesh probably drove the birds south in the way demonstrated well in the case of the Demoiselle crane. In the Mysore region in particular, flocks totalling 7000 birds were met with around the Krishnarajasagar dam in ragi and jowar fields and fruiting banyan trees. A flock of 2000 birds was observed leaving a roost at Hairego Katte, an irrigation tank five kilometers west of Hunsur (47 Kms west of Mysore city). A siege of about 1500 birds was observed at fields bordering the Yelandur tanks (60 Kms. East of Mysore). Some adults and juvenile birds from the flock were observed feeding on

crustaceans laid out to dry by the fishermen, a hitherto unreported habit! Though the 'seegdi', as the crustaceans are known in Kannada, didn't seem a great favourite among the birds - most of them spent the time crowding into *Acacia nilotica* trees that dotted the fields. Redheaded buntings and rosefinches kept them company in the trees. But to beat all these was a colossal flock of over 20,000 birds observed to come into roost at the Kagalawadi lake near Chamarajanagar (the District headquarters of the newly created Chamarajanagar district, some 60 kms. South-east of Mysore; dry, dusty and perennially in drought). The sight of the flock is something to be experienced first hand - the darkening of an already darkening sky; the absolutely unique noise generated, chaotic and deafening; the unending seas of pink and black with a generous dose of black-black in the form of several hundred cormorants. I doubt if similar scenes can be witnessed every year at the place, I am somewhat justified in hoping for one next year.

The damage caused by the pastors to ripening grain was considerable taking the farmers' complaints into account, but the birds, much to the relief of the farmers, soon turned to the fruiting Banyan and other fig trees that are present in good numbers throughout the countryside. Any fruiting tree could be expected to have flocks of rosy pastors in attendance.

The other bird at hand, the black-headed yellow wagtail, also saw a surge in the number of wintering individuals throughout the Mysore region (Mysore, Mandya and Chamarajanagar districts) with appropriate habitat. The most favoured areas were grassy tank bunds, drying tank beds, 'dry' fields of just harvested ragi and jowar or drying fields of gram and pulses close to water. The wet rice fields were not much patronized. Even new layouts in urban areas had their share of this wagtail! This bird, in all previous seasons, was particularly uncommon although unfailingly present in small numbers at a few favourite sites year after year. The drought factor may have been the reason again, although other yellow wagtail subspecies or the grey and white wagtail showed no appreciable influx as this one had.

Eight Demoiselle cranes were sighted at Ayarahalli, a water fowl counting site in the backwaters of the Krishnarajasagar reservoir, on the 28th of January 2001. A lone greater flamingo, another rarity, also kept company at a distance - a contrastingly beautiful company. A score of new birds - of - prey records for the area as well as several warblers turned up. A particularly significant and incident-trodden year. The year that I shall always remember as the year of the rosy pastor.



The absence or extreme rarity of mammals in the Andamans is a striking feature of the jungles. No monkeys; no squirrels; no deer; no carnivora. This is accounted for by the fact that the islands constituting this group have never been joined to the main land. The presence of the only three species may possibly be explained by their having originally survived from shipwreck.

Birds, on the other hand, are numerous both as individuals and in species. There are altogether about 100 resident kinds, of which one-fourth are peculiar to the Islands. These include a handsome little tree pie; a small drongo; a secretive little bush warbler, discovered by and named after me; a black naped golden oriole; a white myna with black wings and tail; a black naped blue flycatcher; a shama with some beautiful song notes; an orange ground-thrush; a gaudy little sun bird; a large black woodpecker with a crimson crest; a night-jar; a coucal; two large green parakeets; a little scops owl; a green fruit pigeon; a cuckoo-dove; a banded rail and a striking bright chestnut coloured crane. The nests and eggs of 7 to 8 of the above species were unknown when I arrived in the Andamans. Before I left they had all been found and described. The nest of the bush warbler was particularly difficult to locate. The birds frequent the densest low undergrowth and are rarely seen, but their presence is betrayed by their curious, loud, rather jerky shrill utterance of 4 or 5 notes. On the memorable occasion of the finding of the nest I was exploring near the

## Birds in the Andamans

Extracts from the Diaries of B.B. OSMASTON (ex. of the Indian Forest Service)

summit of Mount Harriet in very thick jungle. The rainy season had rendered everything soaking wet. I had heard the characteristic call-note of the bird and had forced my way into the undergrowth. In order to see better I was on all fours.

Suddenly the note of the bush warbler, which was only 5 ft away, changed to what was evidently its alarm call, a clicking sound. I realised that I must be close to the nest and began carefully to scrutinise all possible sites. One of the common plants growing here was a kind of ginger into which dead leaves of various kinds had fallen. In one of these ginger plants, only a few inches above the ground was a delightfully hidden tiny nest. A ginger leaf hung over and concealed the nest which was lined with bits of dry bamboo leaves. It contained four beautiful little eggs of a bright chestnut red colour, no bigger than the eggs of the British willow warbler. After two years of fruitless search I had at last found the nest of this bird, a red letter day indeed in my Indian experience.

Unfortunately one of the parent birds had to be secured for correct identification. It was sent to the Tring museum where it was examined by Mr Hartert who pronounced it to be a new sub-species, and named it *Horornis pallidipes osmastoni*. Another bird whose nest and eggs had never been described was the Andaman shama. This is a small race of the Indian shama from which it differs in the sexes being coloured alike, and in the abdomen being white instead of rufous. The Indian

shama frequents evergreen jungle and has a superb song, consisting of short phrases of loud clear notes which have a special charm when heard in the silent solitudes of the forest. The Andaman shama is also a denizen of the thick forest, and in spite of what A.O. Hume says of its song, I found it little inferior to that of its Indian cousin. Being anxious to get a nest I decided to provide it with nesting boxes. These were made 9 ins by 9 ins x 6 ins, and were given a large side entrance, suitable for a robin. On March 28th, accompanied by a Burman convict carrying 12 of these boxes, I explored a likely forest not far from Port Blair.

My plan was to listen for the song of a Shama and on hearing it to nail one of my boxes onto a tree trunk nearby, 4 or 5 feet from the ground. In wandering about in various directions I disposed of all my boxes, and the Burman was told to note carefully their position so that I should be able to find them again.

On April 17th I revisited the locality with the Burman, and we succeeded in finding all the boxes, and what was still better, no less than 9 of them had shama's nests in them, some with eggs and others under construction. These results were far better than I had dared to hope for, and the fact that so many had been selected made it probable that natural nesting sites were not easily found. Later I took one nest full of half fledged young and reared them in my house on Chatham Island. I fed them almost entirely on insects which in a tropical climate are available in almost any quantity in the shape of termites, grasshoppers and larvae of various sorts. They became exceedingly tame and were allowed to roam about the garden. At first they were very like young robins in their dappled plumage. Later they grew long tails and put on their black and white, like miniature magpies. The males were very pugnacious. If I showed them a looking glass they would attack their reflection with great vehemence. I found this most helpful when I wanted to catch them in the garden, for although they

were tame and fearless they had learnt skilfully to avoid capture. When the shaving glass was produced the bird would instantly forget everything but his rival and hurl himself at the glass so that I had no difficulty in capturing him in my hand. They were very fond of small centipedes which I found for them under sticks and stones. I taught two of the cocks to whistle a tune 'Way down upon the Swanee River' one reproduced it quite well, the other could only master it partially and would persist in finishing out of tune.

The Andaman banded crane is another bird about whose nest and eggs nothing was known. The colour of the bird is remarkable. All the upper parts are a rich rufous chestnut, the lower parts being striped black and white. The bill is a beautiful chrysoprase green, and the iris of the eye deep crimson. In spite of this conspicuous colouring the bird lives in such seclusion in the thick swampy forests, and is so exceedingly shy that it is very rarely seen. In the 3 years I spent, very largely in the Andaman forests, I only saw the bird three times, but it is undoubtedly widespread, and this is proved by the fact that an American ornithologist, when collecting birds in the Andamans, failed to get a specimen of the crane until he tried setting snares. He then succeeded in taking no less than 60 specimens in one rather restricted area.

A.O. Hume described some eggs, which he attributed to this bird, as being pale dun, spotted and blotched with reddish brown and with underlying grey markings. Such eggs certainly did not belong to this crane which I discovered laid pure white eggs. The eggs wrongly attributed to this crane by Hume were probably those of the Andamanese banded rail with whose eggs they agree.

I found several nests of the ruddy crane, all in damp and rather dense forest. The eggs were pure white and usually only four in number.

## REVIEW

**THREATENED BIRDS OF THE WORLD** [LYNX EDICIONS AND BIRDLIFE INTERNATIONAL (2000) BARCELONA AND CAMBRIDGE, U.K. EUROS 115 (ABOUT \$103).] **REVIEWED BY** AAMIR ALI, 14 ch. de la Tourelle, CH-1209 Geneva.

This is a majestic, magnificent and mighty book. It has 850 pages packed with useful information; has beautiful illustrations, charts and maps; is the official source for birds on the IUCN Red List; has the support of all the major bird societies of the world; about a thousand experts collaborated in the production; and it weighs 3½ kg. It is expensive @ over \$100 but not for what it is.

It was Peter Scott who, in 1963, conceived the International Red Data Books. The first of these appeared in 1964 while the first Global Checklist of Threatened Birds (1029 species) was published in 1988 by BirdLife International, the successor to the International Council for Bird Preservation. The second

with 1111 birds was published in 1994 and the book under review is the third. It covers 1186 threatened species in detail, each with an illustration and a map. In addition, 727 Near Threatened birds are covered for the first time, but in less detail.

Since 1800, some 103 birds have become extinct; today 1186 species (12% of all species) risk extinction within the next 100 years. Of these, 182 are Critical (facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future eg. Jerdon's Courser); another 321 are Endangered (facing a very high risk of extinction in the medium-term future eg. Black-necked stork). Other categories are Conservation Dependent (dependent on a specific conservation programme eg. Dalmatian Pelican) and Data Deficient (inadequate information to make an assessment eg. Andaman crane). The extinction risk has been evaluated against objective criteria.

The extinction of species has, of course, been a regular feature of the evolutionary process. But while the rate used to be

about one species dying out every 100 years, it has now accelerated to 50 times that rate. The prediction is that 460 species will be extinct by 2100: six years ago the prediction was 400. We moderns do love speed.

It doesn't need experts to tell us that human beings and their activities are the main threat. Habitat loss and degradation threaten 1008 species, or 85% of all threatened birds. Of these, 74% are affected by the recent catastrophic loss of tropical forests: between 1960 and 1990, 20% of all forests or 4.5 million km<sup>2</sup> were cleared, mainly for logging and conversion to agriculture. Over 90% of threatened birds live in tropical forests. It is not surprising that Indonesia and Brazil are top scorers with the highest number of Threatened and Near Threatened species: 306 and 188 respectively.

Asia has very high rates of forest clearance. The Philippines has the highest proportion of threatened endemics: 86%. There is also a high concentration in the Himalayas but these are mostly birds with smaller ranges and less intensive threats. The pet trade plays a significant part in species-loss which explains the dramatic decline of parrots: 57% of parrots are subject to trapping; the delightful yellow-crested cockatoo of Indonesia (full page illustration) has disappeared from many islands and is close to extinction on others. The price paid for beauty.

The pet trade threatens 111 species; another 256 species are victims of hunting and trapping. Invasive species are responsible for many extinctions, mostly island birds; some 298 species are currently menaced by this.

A particularly welcome feature of the book is the section devoted to Solutions, indicating possibilities for action. The BirdLife International Partnership, comprising nearly a thousand persons in the Bird Life global network, have set 5442 targets, hoping to achieve a measurable improvement in the status of 10% of threatened species by 2004. Several threatened species still need surveys to document distribution, population, sites: so research remains a necessary and vital tool. An example: the Austral Rail hadn't been recorded since 1959, but intensive targeted surveys in 1998-99 discovered it in several places.

For 1033 species, enough data is available to set targets; action can be focused on factors such as invasive species, hunting, pet trade, intensive species management, recovery management, reintroduction, action on sites. For 483 species, the identification of key sites and their protection will be the main target.

The BirdLife Partnership supports people working for birds and biodiversity; it hopes to have individual or institutional promoters for half the threatened species by 2004. These promoters can act in various ways: working with International conventions, developing national protected area networks, lobbying for key sites, generating local awareness. These are all activities to which readers of the Newsletter can contribute.

Another welcome feature is the listing of species by territories. The information on Asian species was compiled from the Asia Red Data Book (supported *inter alia* by the Loke Wan Tho

Foundation, familiar to readers of the NL). India has the doubtful privilege of having 123 of its birds listed, of whom 7 are Critical, 9 Endangered, 52 Vulnerable, 1 Conservation Dependent, 52 Near Threatened and 12 Data Deficient. The Bombay Natural History Society is the BirdLife Partner and there is surely great scope for birders, either singly or in groups, to work with it. In the last issue, our Editor asked us to play our part in the BirdLife's Important Bird Area programme, identifying important sites. The book is a trumpet call to join in.

This is a beautiful book and a pleasure to browse through - such a pleasure that one is tempted to forget that all these hundreds of lovely birds are on the primrose path to extinction - a fate for which we are largely responsible. The number of birders in India has grown exponentially in recent years; may we hope that their efforts will ensure that not all this glory will pass from our world?

#### Threatened Birds of India - Year 2000

| Sl.No. | English Name                    | Scientific Name                     | Category |
|--------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| 1.     | Pink-headed duck                | <i>Rhodnessa caryophyllacea</i>     | EX       |
| 2.     | White-rumped vulture            | <i>Gyps bengalensis</i>             | CR       |
| 3.     | Long-billed vulture             | <i>Gyps indicus</i>                 | CR       |
| 4.     | *Himalayan quail                | <i>Ophrysia superciliosa</i>        | EX       |
| 5.     | Siberian crane                  | <i>Grus leucogeranus</i>            | CR N     |
| 6.     | *Jerdon's courser               | <i>Rhinoptilus bitorquatus</i>      | CR       |
| 7.     | *Forest owl                     | <i>Athene blewitti</i>              | CR       |
| 8.     | White-bellied heron             | <i>Ardea insignis</i>               | EN       |
| 9.     | Oriental stork                  | <i>Ciconia boyciana</i>             | EN       |
| 10.    | Greater adjutant                | <i>Leptoptilos dubius</i>           | EN       |
| 11.    | White-headed duck               | <i>Oxyura leucocephala</i>          | EN N     |
| 12.    | White-winged duck               | <i>Caissa scutulata</i>             | EN       |
| 13.    | *Great Indian bustard           | <i>Ardeotis nigriceps</i>           | EN       |
| 14.    | Bengal florican                 | <i>Houbaropsis bengalensis</i>      | EN       |
| 15.    | Lesser florican                 | <i>Sypheoides indica</i>            | EN       |
| 16.    | Nordmann's greenshank           | <i>Tringa guttifer</i>              | EN N     |
| 17.    | *Rufous-breasted laughingthrush | <i>Garrulax cachinnans</i>          | EN N     |
| 18.    | Spot-billed pelican             | <i>Pelecanus philippensis</i>       | VU       |
| 19.    | Lesser adjutant                 | <i>Leptoptilos javanicus</i>        | VU       |
| 20.    | Lesser white-fronted goose      | <i>Anser erythropus</i>             | VU       |
| 21.    | Red-breasted goose              | <i>Branta rutilicollis</i>          | VU       |
| 22.    | Baikal teal                     | <i>Anas formosa</i>                 | VU       |
| 23.    | Martlet teal                    | <i>Marmarometta angustirostris</i>  | VU       |
| 24.    | Daar's pochard                  | <i>Aythya baeri</i>                 | VU N     |
| 25.    | Pallas's sea-eagle              | <i>Haliaeetus leucorhynchus</i>     | VU       |
| 26.    | Greater spotted eagle           | <i>Aquila clanga</i>                | VU N     |
| 27.    | Imperial eagle                  | <i>Aquila heliaca</i>               | VU N     |
| 28.    | Lesser kestrel                  | <i>Falco naumanni</i>               | VU N     |
| 29.    | *Nicobar scrubfowl              | <i>Meleapodius nicobarenensis</i>   | VU       |
| 30.    | Swamp Francolin                 | <i>Francolinus gularis</i>          | VU       |
| 31.    | Manipur bush-quail              | <i>Perdicula manipurensis</i>       | VU       |
| 32.    | Chestnut-breasted partridge     | <i>Arborophila madagascariensis</i> | VU       |
| 33.    | Western tragopan                | <i>Tragopan melanoleucus</i>        | VU       |
| 34.    | Blyth's tragopan                | <i>Tragopan blythii</i>             | VU       |
| 35.    | Sclater's monal                 | <i>Lophophorus sclateri</i>         | VU       |
| 36.    | Cheer pheasant                  | <i>Catreus wallichi</i>             | VU       |

|                                  |                                         |      |                                    |                                 |      |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------|
| 37. Hume's pheasant              | <i>Symaticus humiae</i>                 | VU   | 93. Satyr tragopan                 | <i>Tragopan satyra</i>          | NT   |
| 38. Green peafowl                | <i>Pavo muticus</i>                     | VU   | 94. Tibetan sared-pheasant         | <i>Crossoptilon harmani</i>     | NT   |
| 39. Sarus crane                  | <i>Grus antigone</i>                    | VU   | 95. Houbara bustard                | <i>Chlamydotis undulata</i>     | NT   |
| 40. Black-necked crane           | <i>Grus nigricollis</i>                 | VU   | 96. Asian dowitcher                | <i>Limnodromus semipalmatus</i> | NT   |
| 41. Hooded crane                 | <i>Grus monacha</i>                     | VU   | 97. Beach thick-knee               | <i>Esacus magnirostris</i>      | NT   |
| 42. Masked finfoot               | <i>Helopais personata</i>               | VU N | 98. Black-bellied tern             | <i>Sterna acuticauda</i>        | NT   |
| 43. Sociable lapwing             | <i>Vanellus gregarius</i>               | VU N | 99. *Andaman wood-pigeon           | <i>Columba palumboides</i>      | NT   |
| 44. Wood snipe                   | <i>Gallinago nemoricola</i>             | VU   | 100. *Andaman cuckoo-dove          | <i>Macropygia rufipennis</i>    | NT   |
| 45. Spoon-billed sandpiper       | <i>Eurymorhynchus pygmaeus</i>          | VU N | 101. Nicobar pigeon                | <i>Catopias nicobarica</i>      | NT   |
| 46. Indian skimmer               | <i>Rynchops albicollis</i>              | VU   | 102. *Nicobar parakeet             | <i>Psittacula caniceps</i>      | NT   |
| 47. Pale-backed pigeon           | <i>Columba eversmanni</i>               | VU N | 103. Long-tailed parakeet          | <i>Psittacula longicauda</i>    | NT   |
| 48. *Nilgiri wood-pigeon         | <i>Columba alpinstonii</i>              | VU   | 104. *Andaman scops-owl            | <i>Otus bali</i>                | NT   |
| 49. Pale-capped pigeon           | <i>Columba punicea</i>                  | VU   | 105. *Andaman hawk-owl             | <i>Ninox affinis</i>            | NT   |
| 50. Dark-rumped swift            | <i>Apus acuticauda</i>                  | VU   | 106. Ward's torgon                 | <i>Harpactes wardi</i>          | NI   |
| 51. Rufous-necked hornbill       | <i>Aceros nipalensis</i>                | VU   | 107. Blyth's kingfisher            | <i>Alcedo hercules</i>          | NT   |
| 52. *Narcondam hornbill          | <i>Aceros narcondami</i>                | VU   | 108. Brown-winged kingfisher       | <i>Polypterus amaropectus</i>   | NT   |
| 53. *Yellow-throated bulbul      | <i>Pycnonotus xantholaemus</i>          | VU   | 109. Malabar pied-hornbill         | <i>Anthractoceros coronatus</i> | NT   |
| 54. *Nicobar bulbul              | <i>Hypsipetes nicobarensis</i>          | VU   | 110. Great hornbill                | <i>Buceros bicornis</i>         | NT   |
| 55. Grey-sided thrush            | <i>Turdus leae</i>                      | VU N | 111. Brown hornbill                | <i>Ananthus brookei</i>         | NT   |
| 56. Rusty-bellied shortwing      | <i>Brachypteryx hyperythra</i>          | VU   | 112. Yellow-rumped                 |                                 |      |
| 57. *White-bellied shortwing     | <i>Brachypteryx major</i>               | VU   | honeyguide                         | <i>Indicator xanthonotus</i>    | NT   |
| 58. *White-browed bushchat       | <i>Saxicola macromyncha</i>             | VU   | *Andaman woodpecker                | <i>Dryocopus hodgki</i>         | NT   |
| 59. White-throated bushchat      | <i>Saxicola insignis</i>                | VU N | *Nilgiri pipit                     | <i>Anthus nilghirensis</i>      | NT   |
| 60. Marsh babbler                | <i>Ptilinopus pelusius</i>              | VU   | 115. Firethroat                    | <i>Luscinia pectardens</i>      | NT N |
| 61. *Rusty-throated wren-babbler | <i>Spelaornis badeiguanis</i>           | VU   | 116. Chest-backed laughingthrush   | <i>Garrulax nuchalis</i>        | NT   |
| 62. *Tawny-breasted wren-babbler | <i>Spelaornis longicaudatus</i>         | VU   | 117. *Grey-breasted laughingthrush | <i>Garrulax jerdoni</i>         | NT   |
| 63. Snowy-throated babbler       | <i>Stachyris opiei</i>                  | VU   | 118. Rufous-throated wren-warbler  | <i>Spelaornis caudatus</i>      | NT   |
| 64. Jerdon's babbler             | <i>Chrysomma altirostre</i>             | VU   | 119. Wedge-billed wren-babbler     | <i>Sporococcyx humei</i>        | NT   |
| 65. Slender-billed babbler       | <i>Turdoides longirostris</i>           | VU   | 120. Giant babax                   | <i>Babax waddelli</i>           | NT   |
| 66. *Black-breasted parrotbill   | <i>Paradoxornis flavirostris</i>        | VU   | 121. Rufous-vented prinia          | <i>Prinia burnesii</i>          | NT   |
| 67. Grey-crowned prinia          | <i>Prinia cinereocapilla</i>            | VU   | 122. Long-billed bush-warbler      | <i>Brachypteryx major</i>       | NT   |
| 68. Bristled grass-warbler       | <i>Chaetomis striatus</i>               | VU   | 123. Rufous-rumped grassbird       | <i>Graminicola bengalensis</i>  | NT   |
| 69. *Broad-tailed grassbird      | <i>Schoenicola platyura</i>             | VU   | 124. *Black-and-rufous flycatcher  | <i>Ficedula nigrifrons</i>      | NT   |
| 70. Kashmir flycatcher           | <i>Ficedula subrubra</i>                | VU   | 125. *Nilgiri flycatcher           | <i>Eumyias albicaudata</i>      | NT   |
| 71. *White-naped tit             | <i>Parus nuchalis</i>                   | VU   | 126. Andaman drongo                | <i>Dicrurus andamanensis</i>    | NT   |
| 72. Beautiful nuthatch           | <i>Sitta formosa</i>                    | VU   | 127. *Andaman treepie              | <i>Geranocitta bayleyi</i>      | NT   |
| 73. *Green avadavat              | <i>Amandava formosa</i>                 | VU   | 128. *Andaman crane                | <i>Rallina canningi</i>         | DD   |
| 74. Yellow weaver                | <i>Floceus megarhynchus</i>             | VU   | 129. *Nicobar scops-owl            | <i>Otus albus</i>               | DD   |
| 75. Dalmatian pelican            | <i>Pelecanus crispus</i>                | DD N |                                    |                                 |      |
| 76. Persian shearwater           | <i>Puffinus persicus</i>                | NT N |                                    |                                 |      |
| 77. Oriental darter              | <i>Anhinga melanogaster</i>             | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 78. Painted stork                | <i>Mycteria leucocephala</i>            | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 79. Black-necked stork           | <i>Ephippiorhynchus asiaticus</i>       | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 80. Black-headed ibis            | <i>Threskiornis melanoleucocephalus</i> | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 81. Lesser flamingo              | <i>Phoenicopterus minor</i>             | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 82. Ferruginous duck             | <i>Aythya nyroca</i>                    | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 83. White-tailed eagle           | <i>Haliaeetus albicilla</i>             | NT N |                                    |                                 |      |
| 84. Lesser fish-eagle            | <i>Ichthyophaga humilis</i>             | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 85. Grey-headed fish-eagle       | <i>Ichthyophaga ichthyophaga</i>        | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 86. Cinereous vulture            | <i>Aegypius monachus</i>                | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 87. Red-headed vulture           | <i>Sarcogyps calvus</i>                 | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 88. *Nicobar serpent-eagle       | <i>Spilornis minimus</i>                | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 89. *Andaman serpent-eagle       | <i>Spilornis alpinus</i>                | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 90. Pallid harrier               | <i>Circus macrourus</i>                 | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 91. *Nicobar scarrowhawk         | <i>Accipiter butleri</i>                | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |
| 92. White-cheeked partridge      | <i>Arborophila atrigularis</i>          | NT   |                                    |                                 |      |

| Cat. | Category                        | No. |
|------|---------------------------------|-----|
| EX   | Extinct                         | 2   |
| CR   | Critical                        | 7   |
| EN   | Endangered                      | 10  |
| VU   | Vulnerable                      | 57  |
| CD   | Conservation Dependent          | 1   |
| NT   | Near Threatened                 | 52  |
| DD   | Data Deficient                  | 2   |
| N =  | Non-breeding visitor            |     |
| * =  | 34 species are endemic to India |     |



## Reference :

BirdLife International (2000) Threatened Birds of the World. Barcelona and Cambridge, UK: Lynx Edicions and BirdLife International.



**ANNOUNCEMENT. AASHEESH PITTIE, 8-2-545, Road No. 7, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500 034**

A BIBLIOGRAPHIC INDEX TO THE BIRDS OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT, compiled by Aasheesh Pittie, is an electronic database using the abridged Papyrus Retriever programme of the popular bibliographic software PYPYRUS. This database is being constantly updated and fine tuned and contains (as on date) 18,000+ references gleaned from 650+ published sources and is indexed on 4,000+ keywords. This database does not purport to be a COMPLETE bibliography of Ornithological literature for the region it covers, but is the most comprehensive produced anywhere to date.

This keyword-based bibliographic database covers the Indian Subcontinent, which for the purposes of this work consists of the areas within the political boundaries of the following countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Maldiv Islands, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. In addition, Tibet is also covered.

This database is an indispensable reference tool for all those interested in the birds of this region. Ornithologists, amateur birdwatchers, faculty of universities, editors of ornithological journals, newsletters, etc., research scholars, etc.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

**LETTER, DATED 1ST MAY 2001, LAVKUMAR KHACHER, Hinglaj Baug, Vashishta, Arunachal Pradesh 195 103**

As ever, receiving the NL is a pleasure. I have just received Vol. 41, No. 2, and have some responses to the Editorial.

The Ahmedabad Earthquake should read the Kachchh Earthquake. Ahmedabad hogged the limelight because many poorly constructed highrises collapsed. What should worry us is that apart from our several birding friends in and around Bhuj who may have suffered, the earthquake may have altered the levels in the Great Rann. If so, the future of the flamingos is cause for concern. A centimeter rise in level could change water flows. I intend keeping an eye during the year. Perhaps

the Bill Selover bequest could be aside for a field trip to the area following the monsoon. Or, why not add the amount to the corps of the NL for Birdwatchers.

While I agree to the Donation to BirdLife International being transferred to BNHS, I find your reporting "I have spoken to their Director, Dr. Asad Rahmani, and he welcomes the idea" most amusing. Who would not welcome receiving money? Perhaps the amount should be spent on producing a series of picture cards and a photo calendar on the dams with a view to raise more money for the Newsletter - and ICBN through BNHS.

The Peter Jackson Prize is quite cuckoo brained. How does one verify the number of birds seen? Instead, why not have a photo competition for young amateurs? the prize should carry a citation signed by yourself and Peter (?)

I trust your heart is ticking away strongly. Look after yourself. That makes me suggest why not develop a list of birdwatchers and award the citation and the prize to the oldest, active birdwatchers alive? We all could strive to get recognition by living longer and continuing to subscribe to the NL!



**THE MYSTERY OF THE DEAD EMERALD DOVES, Lt. Gen. B.C. NANDA, Hebbtagiri, K. Nidugane P.O., Madikeri 571 201, Kodagu Dist.**

My wife and I live in a house on the Western Ghats. It is located close to the crest of a hill at an altitude of approx. 4,300 ft. above sea level. For those who are technical and specific the location is approximately 12°27' North and 75°43' East.

We have planted trees and coffee around the house except for the area North and South. As the trees grew the bird population increased and now we have such a variety of bird song and colourful display that from dawn to dusk there is never a moment that a bird lover cannot cherish.

Among the birds that frequent this area is the beautiful emerald dove (*Chalcophaps indica*). My wife found one of these beautiful birds lying dead near the door to the South of our house on the 11th of September 2000.

Not very much later, on 3rd October 2000, I found another emerald dove near the front door to the North of the house. Both birds appeared to have died in the daytime. Not being scientists or ornithologists their deaths remained a mystery to us in spite of our amateur detective work.

Then on 6th February 2001 at about 1200 hrs. I was sitting in our enclosed veranda on the Northern Front of our house and talking to a friend when suddenly there was a whoosh and a thump. On walking out to investigate I found one more of the exquisitely beautiful emerald dove lying dead outside.

I then walked out and had a better look at the door that is half plate glass. All of a sudden the mystery of the dead birds seemed to have been resolved. The flawless glass of the door reflected the trees and coffee surrounding the area so perfectly that it seemed that the vegetation extended beyond the door too! The illusion of the continuity of the wooded area created by the glass door was luring the birds to their unfortunate end.

As birdwatchers are aware, the emerald dove keeps low and flies swiftly. Perhaps the doves found the reflection too realistic. We are convinced that this is the most plausible explanation for the unfortunate fate of the birds. However if any other bird watchers and enthusiasts have another likely theory we would like to hear from them.

We do not want these lovely creatures dying at our doors so perhaps we shall have to do something to distort the reflection in the glass in the near future.



**COOPERATIVE HUNTING AMONG BIRDS, KIRAN KATIKANENI, F#13, B#3, MIGH-2, B.L. Pally, Hyderabad, A.P. 500 044**

First, I apologise for writing so illegibly. And at the same time thank you for the response. I have written about the article by Mr. Madhav Gadgil in which the author doubts about the intelligent way of co-operative hunting among the birds.

He feels that this way of hunting is almost unheard of or unseen among the birds. But I feel that this is incorrect. There can be any number of examples given to prove this point. I give two instances which exemplify this aspect. They are :

(i) The Harris' hawks of the south-western deserts of the US have attained perfection in the co-operative hunting strategy. Their main prey being the desert hares they form a 'hunting party' in which all the adult members contribute. And when the prey is brought down the Alpha female gets to eat first followed by the members according to the pecking order. Their team-association being so perfectly co-ordinated and usually successful they are known as the 'Flying Wolves'.

(ii) The African crowned eagle being a predator of the dense ever-green forests needs to hunt among the thick vegetation where prey visibility and accuracy while the final swoop may be compromised.

To overcome this they have evolved co-operative hunting with their mates.

Once the eagles target their prey among the forest canopy, the male makes an aerial sortie with a frightening call to scare the monkey troop. As the troop gets disbanded and in the process the young members get separated the female makes the final decisive swoop to make the kill. She usually decapitates the prey before flying off to the nest with the kill.

There are many more instances in the avian kingdom to quote from. As Aasheesh Pittie has told me about the most common and well-known example of the pelicans driving their prey into the shallows.

These two instances were shown on the National Geographic Television sometime ago. I wished to raise this point of mine.

Hope you and the readers would agree to this wonderful aspect of avian adaptability.



**THE TEALS AND SHANKS, URUJ SHAHID (Age 17), Near Panditchakki, Moh-Maharaj Nagar, Lakhimpurkheri 262 701**

On the morning of Friday 12th January, I heard the unfamiliar bird calls coming from the pond. As I scanned with my binoculars, I found that these birds were the lesser whistling teals that were floating on the pond. But, in fact, they were enjoying a sunbath. The pond is situated near our residence and the three sides of this polluted pond is surrounded by human habitation. The remaining side is full of fields and between these green fields the modern trains pass with speed and loud noise. But now the birds have become used to living at a place called Maharaj Nagar in Lakhimpurkheri. This is the first time that these duck size birds have been seen at Maharaj Nagar. I spread the news quickly with the help of my father, and all the forest officials and a conservationist, Dr. V.P. Singh, gathered to see these resident tree ducks. Even now these aquatic birds have been beautifying our town. In the beginning, some ravenous fowling, along with their fowling pieces, had been looking at these birds in a greedy manner, but they have gone away depressed because these birds are wiser than them.

On 2 February 2001, at about 08.00 hrs., I spotted seven spotted red shanks foraging by probing into the mud with their bills. They were near a small tank and this tank is situated at a distance of half a kilometer from that pond. These birds along with many other water birds such as sandpipers, bronze winged jacanas, dabchicks, egrets, herons, cormorants, storks, etc., are also found around these ponds and tanks. The societies, NGOs and also the satellite channels like Discovery, Animal Planet, BBC and National Geographic, have been trying to save our natural and avian wealth, yet day by day our birds are becoming endangered. Please help save them before these winged jewels of the sky depart from the earth. Remember, we cannot survive in the world without these birds.



**WHICH NIGHTJAR WAS IT? ZAI WHITAKER, Crocodile Bank, Post Bag 4, Mahabalipuram 603 104, TAMIL NADU.**

In February my son and I were terrorized by a nightjar. It was midnight and we were sleeping outside to beat the heat and avoid the brick missiles from renovation work going on in our bedrooms.

Just as we were falling into sweet slumber a nightjar marched into our garden calling loudly and plaintively, Pyoo? Pyoo! Pyoo? Pyoo! Asking a question sternly, and answering it himself/herself. We were not in the mood for birdwatching and shouted Shoo! Shoo! but it just continued. I tried to frighten it into flight but it was firmly grounded and just got louder. Now even our watchman, a sound sleeper, heard it and came out with his powerful torch. He "hypnotized" the bird with the beam and it proceeded to hunch down into the sand, wings spread. He picked it up and deposited it some ten meters from our gate. We went back to bed, muttering about bird brains. And

just as sweet slumber was returning, we heard the dreaded sound again. Pyoo? Pyoo!



**A MARCH DAY IN BANGALORE CITY, M.G. MUTHANNA,**  
16, Cubbon Road, Bangalore 560 001

We live very close to the zero milestone of Bangalore, which means we are in the heart of the town and yet we see and hear an interesting variety and number of birds throughout the year.

The mornings these days start well before 5 am with the plaintive call of the ever active koel - there are 3 families of koel and they feed on the numerous mulberry fruits which surround the house. The next call is the melodious singer the magpie-robin who roost on a mango tree, scrupulously avoiding, the two bird boxes I have put for them - instead 2 families of squirrels have made these boxes their permanent home!! The magpie robin later forages in the garden whistling many musical notes, which is a joy to hear. A more or less simultaneous visitor is the beautiful black headed oriole with its lovely flute like whistle, as the day goes on it moves from its high perch and visits the now busy flowering drumstick tree, which also attracts the lovely purple sunbird. A pair of sunbirds nest every year in the protective cover of the mixed bougainvillea in the back open verandah. At the moment there are two young ones in the nest who seem to be endlessly hungry and the parents have a busy time feeding them. The chirping tailor birds spend most of the day in the front garden, even taking their afternoon bath in the several water trays placed in the garden. This year they have not nested yet, otherwise they stick together two leaves of any broad leaf plant in the garden and build a nest, last year two young tailor birds joined what I feel is a declining population.

The morning also brings the familiar cackle of the common myna, one pair every year build their nest in the hollow of the mango tree - last year part of their building material was a discarded long tape from a cassette, this tape swaying and rustling in the breeze kept away even crows and saved the eggs and the young ones from harm !!

The roseringed parakeet with its screeching tones is ever present and is generally a wandering bird and spends only a few minutes on the taller trees before it moves on.

The red-vented bulbuls are the other visitors who use the bird bath/water trays and their cheerful warbling gratefully drowns all the other sounds of the neighbourhood.

The grey tit is another occasional visitor whose place of residence I am yet to locate.

The cooing of the spotted doves is another peaceful sound. A pair always nests in the tall Ashoka trees in front, the survival rate of the young ones despite my best attempts are few - feral cats being their worst enemies.

The black drongo is always present especially noticeable in the evenings when they swoop down from their perch on the defunct telephone pole to catch insects.

The green barbet is ever present and has given Bangalore another cause for all India fame - because its loud 'Kotar - Kotar' call carries over the TV and Radio whenever there is a cricket match at the Chinnaswamy stadium which is close by to us and is aptly termed the 'Cricket Barbet' of Bangalore."

The evening sky around dusk is filled with flying fox which fly eastwards from their roosting trees in the city police commissioner's office to the fruit trees nearby. The shrill screech of the spotted owl signals that nightfall has arrived.



*Mother sunbird feeding its young.*



**NO DRAINS - NO BIRDS, J.L. SINGH, D3/1, Rites Flats,**  
Ashok Vihar (Phase 3), New Delhi 110 052

Even a cursory glance at a map of Delhi will tell you of the large number of drains and canals that run through it. The number in North Delhi is larger. Among the better known is the Najafgarh drain that runs through areas like Punjabi Bagh, Shashtri Nagar and Kamala Nagar, before emptying itself into the Yamuna near Wazirabad. The latter part of its meandering takes it through heavily built up areas but upstream where it enters Delhi from Haryana, my impression was that it went primarily through cultivated or waste land.

How wrong I was. Of course, I can't be blamed as my impressions were based on a WWF-sponsored bird count I had joined in 1983, when we had counted birds along this waterway. Soon after this count, I was transferred out of Delhi and it is only now that I am back. I decided to take advantage of the holiday on 2nd October and re-visit the part of the drain that I had covered earlier.

I drove to the point where the Outer Ring Road crosses the Najafgarh drain. This is between Sunder Vihar and Vikaspuri for those who are familiar with Delhi. At this point, a narrow paved road runs along the drain all the way up to the point where the drain crosses Shivaji Road. The erstwhile Najafgarh Road is now named after the Maratha hero. The distance covered for this portion is of the order of 9-10 kilometers.

What a sea change in the intervening 17 years! At no time along the route did I find a point where I could not see any buildings. At many locations, buildings are now right on the banks of the drain. The drain itself gives the impression of a sewer, albeit a wide one. At most points it is about 30-50 meters wide. The inevitable plastic bags are everywhere as is other garbage generated by humans. A smaller drain entered the main channel very near my start. The water pouring in was foaming and frothing showing that it must have been saturated with chemicals. Obviously, the first casualty is birds.

Not that there were no birds. Only, numbers had shrunk considerably compared to 17 years back. Also, birds that are commensal on man have increased in leaps and bounds. Thus, there is no shortage of blue rock pigeons (*Columba livia*) or common crows (*Corvus splendens*). Nor is there any dearth of pariah kites (*Milvus migrans*) or little brown doves (*Streptopelia senegalensis*). It's the water birds that I had expected that were either missing or visible in very small numbers only.

The birds that I finally spotted on the waters of the drain or on its banks do not make happy reading. I do not intend making an exhaustive list but only cover the more interesting specimens that I was able to observe.

The most common bird was the dabchick (*Tachybaptus ruficollis*). At each location that I stopped there were at least 6-8 or so. I did notice that while dabchicks usually dive as soon as you appear in their field of view, these dabchicks tended to take me for granted and there was little diving. At a few points, there were Indian moorhens interspersed among the dabchicks but in much smaller numbers. At one point there were 15 spotbills (*Anas poecilorhynchos*) on the bank opposite to where I was. These were the only ducks that I saw apart from another 4 spotbills at another point.

The ever present red-wattled lapwing (*Vanellus indicus*) was heard more often than seen but did make an occasional appearance. At a few points I was pleased to see a number of black winged stilts (*Himantopus himantopus*). Cattle egrets (*Bubulcus ibis*) were common with a few little egrets (*Egretta garzetta*) also visible. Paddy birds (*Ardeola grayii*) are inevitable on all water bodies in India. At one point I saw a white-breasted waterhen (*Amauromma phoenicurus*) also. I saw just two white-breasted kingfishers (*Halcyon smyrnensis*); I had expected many more.

Just as it doesn't take one swallow to make it summer in England, it needs more than one swallow to usher in winter in India. I saw one Indian swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) during this

trip. There were some more at a distance but they were too far for me to recognize. I was using 8x20 binoculars and would have required a spotting telescope to have managed to identify them.

On one tree towards the end of my trip, I found half a dozen green bee-eaters (*Merops orientalis*). They were making their characteristic forays after winged insects as I watched them for some time. Suddenly I found one being chased by a drongo (*Dicrurus adsimilis*). The tinier bee-eater was flying desperately and wheeling and swerving to avoid the drongo but the larger and more aggressive drongo remained on its tail. I am not aware of the final outcome as the pair finally flew off away from the drain and away from my line of view.

Ultimately, such degradation of good birding waterways is bound to take place in our cities with their burgeoning populations. I remember an article written, if I remember right, by the well-known birder, Peter Jackson, about 25 years back, where he had counted over 100 birds in Delhi in one 24-hour period. I am sure this is not possible now. That's the price of progress. I hope our children are successful in halting such progress as we have failed to do so. [Peter saw 146 birds in 24 hrs. He received the Salim Ali International Award for Nature Conservation last September. - Editor]



**RARE SIGHTING OF PLAINTIVE CUCKOO AT AAKULAM.**  
K.B. SANJAYAN, T.C. XII/1082, Law College Road,  
Kunnukuzhi P.O., PMG, Thiruvananthapuram 695 037, Kerala.

About 10 members of Warblers and Waders, led by Shri C. Susanth, Co-ordinator, was engaging in the annual waterfowl census at Aakulam lake, some distance away. Suddenly, on hearing a fluty whistle, Kishore, an ace spotter, located an Indian cuckoo (*Cuculus micropterus*) on a Konna tree (*Cassia javanica*). The tree stood on the side of the lake and was bearing pink flowers all along its long branches, mostly bereft of leaves. On closer examination, it was discovered that the Indian cuckoo was in the company of three other birds of the cuckoo species, viz. pied crested cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*), plaintive cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerinus*) and Indian koel (*Eudynamis scolopacea*).

The typical broad black bands which ran upto its tail were clearly visible on the ventral side of the Indian cuckoo. While the pied crested cuckoo was characteristic with its crest, the plaintive cuckoo was distinguishable by its dark grey dorsal and whitish breast and the Indian koel was represented by a black male one. The solitary birds provided an unforgettable sight of four species of the cuckoo clan perching on the same tree. Incidentally, it was the first sighting of plaintive cuckoo at Aakulam by Warblers and Waders, ever since it began frequenting this spot about two decades back.

Added to the delight was the chance sighting of a black capped kingfisher (*Halcyon pileata*) at the same water front. The solitary kingfisher was sitting on a coconut frond and making intermittent sorties to the water surface (of the Aakulam lake), each time capturing a fish and returning to its perch. The cobalt

blue body, black cap and red bill of the kingfisher was shining in the rays of the morning sun. This sighting too was rare, as black capped kingfishers were never before recorded from Aakulam.

The other members of the group were A.K. Shivakumar, K. Harikumar, B. Gopinathan, R. Murugesh and S. Mohith.



**AN INSTANCE OF AGGRESSION AND VOCALIZATION IN JUVENILE GREAT BLACK WOODPECKERS (DRYOCOPUS JAVENSIS). V. SANTHARAM, 68, 1 Floor, Santhome High Road, Madras 600 028**

On 27th April 1995, at Anakkayam near Sholayar (Kerala), I was following the activities of a family party of great black woodpeckers consisting of a pair of adult birds with a young male and female bird, probably just a few days out of the nest. These juveniles were in good plumage in contrast with the adult birds (especially the female) which were in worn-out plumage and apparently in moult.

In the afternoon, I saw the two female birds moving together. The young was constantly harassing her mother for food. In the period of forty-five minutes, the adult bird fed the young one at least twice, regurgitating the food. A little after the second feeding, the duo flew to another tree where they were joined by the juvenile male. The young female bird continued begging for food even as all three birds were perched on the same branch. All of a sudden, the juvenile male which had remained silent all along, seized his sibling's beak and pushed her with some force. At this she retreated to another branch but continued demanding food. A couple of minutes later all of them flew away and disappeared from view.

The juvenile female had a variety of begging calls, the most common being a harsh loud "Churr-Churr", somewhat reminiscent of those of the young keel's (*Eudynamys scolopacea*) begging notes. Once it uttered a call that resembled the calls of the rufous woodpecker (*Celeus brachyurus*) and sounded like "Quenk-Quenk-Quenk". Another resembled the Indian roller's (*Coracias benghalensis*) "Chaunk" call. This was repeated 2-3 times in succession. At Periyar Tiger Reserve (also in Kerala), where another family party of four birds was active (on 17th March, 1996), I heard the begging calls of the young which could be described as "Whichee ... Whichee".

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Printed and Published bi-monthly by S. Sridhar at Navbharath Enterprises, Seshadripuram, Bangalore - 560 020, India.

☎ : 336 4142 / 336 4882, Email : navbarat@blr.vsnl.net.in

For Private Circulation Only.

**Acknowledgement**

This study was supported by Wildlife Conservation Society, New York, U.S.A.



**CLAY LUMPS AS NEST BUILDING MATERIAL IN KITES. DR. ARUNACHALAM KUMAR, P.O. B 53, Mangalore 575 001.**

Atop a coconut palm in my residential garden at Mangalore (Lat 12-50° N Lon 74-53° E) a pair of brahmyn kites (*Haliastur indus*) is busy building a nest. The construction activity, now on for nearly a fortnight, keeps the birds actively foraging for nesting material, evading the internal menace, the crows, from rifling twigs brought in from hard search and long distance. The base of the palm is littered with assorted bric-a-brac that get dislodged from the nest; among the debris, in the main made up of dry sticks, I chanced upon half a dozen or so lumps of clay. Each piece of dry clay, measured around four by two centimeters. Since that day, I have collected over fifty or so pellets of clay that come tumbling down from the nest, whenever the bird shifts positions. The weight of the dry lumps, many of which still surviving the forty foot fall, size and shape wise, now amounts to nearly 600 grams. Also recovered amongst the clay lumps were wedges of wood, and a stone. Both these resembled, in overall dimensions and contour, the pellets of clay.

The coastal city of Mangalore, incidentally, has been the seat of a very prosperous tile industry from centuries. Talc fine clay, garnered from nether corners of the district, lie piled up in heaps at tile factory yards, one or two such units, situated within the city close to the old port built by Tipu Sultan. While it was easy to assume the possible source of the clay lumps the brahmyn kites collected, I am quite confounded by the birds' choice of clay as adjunct nest building material.

Ali & Ripley mention that these kites use wool, rags, tow, skin, leaves and such other miscellaneous rubbish to furnish their twig nests. Is the use of clay as an additional material for nest building among kites portend a need based nuance in ekistic ethology of the brahmyn kite?

**Reference :**

Ali S & Ripley D S: Compact Handbook of Birds of India & Pakistan, 2nd Ed.OUP:1987

Kumar A: Nest material foraging among kites (*Milvus migrans*): Newsletter for Birdwatchers 34:6; 129,1994.



Cover : Rosy Pastor (*Sturnus roseus*) is a distinctive rose-pink myna, frequenting open country, agricultural fields and grasslands during winter. Large flocks wander and follow locust swarms for considerable distances, uttering harsh churr or a variety of grating, chattering and whistling notes. Rosy pastors prefer to roost communally in large congregations in groves, orchards and avenue trees, arriving in flocks and regiments from all quarters to the chosen roosting site by sunset.

Photo : S. Sridhar, ARPS